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# The Collector and Art Critic

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE ARTS AND CRAFTS, BIBLIOGRAPHY, ETC.

VOL. III. No. 2.

MARCH 1, 1905

FIFTEEN CENTS THE COPY.

THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC is published semi-monthly by THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, at 489 Fifth avenue, New York City, at \$2.00 per year subscription for the United States and Canada, and \$2.50 for a foreign subscription.

The single copies will be sold at 15 cents the copy at various agencies, through Brentano's, of New York, Paris and London.

All communications to the Editorial Department should be addressed to THE EDITOR.

All business communications regarding subscriptions and advertising should be addressed to THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC PUBLISHING COMPANY.



INDIANAPOLIS, Ind., Feb. 21, 1905.

To the Editor of THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC.

DEAR SIR: I am in receipt of both your circular and the first number of the revived "Collector and Art Critic." I send you herewith my subscription for the coming year. I want to congratulate you on the reappearance of this valuable paper, and to express the hope that its revival be permanent. It filled a place that no other publication of the kind has ever occupied, and a place that surely needs to be filled. When you ceased publishing a few years ago I felt lost at its absence and have felt so ever since, so you can imagine how welcome to me the magazine is—like the return of an old and well-loved friend.

I hope that you will continue to follow up your plan of campaign for all that is sincere and worthy in art, handling without gloves, as you have always done, the frauds and fakes and impositions that make the old schools especially a happy hunting-ground for all the rascals and cheats of the art world. Especially do I hope to see you continue your work for what is good and sincere in American art, for against the plunderers we need all the help we can get if we are to live and do our best.

A long life, a big subscription list and success to the new venture.

Yours, with best wishes,

W. F.

\* \* \*

I may be allowed to submit this letter, out of many of the same tenor that have been received, and to pledge myself to carry out its sentiments to the letter.

## THE BOSTON "VELASQUEZ."

### I.

The painting, acquired by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, through Dr. Denman Ross, has aroused no end of discussion. It is said to represent Philip IV. of Spain and to have been painted by Velasquez. Its authenticity has been assailed in various quarters, and the controversy, ranging from amiable to acrid, is one of supreme interest to the art world. The subject of the expertising of paintings has come prominently to the fore.

Expertism is a serious thing. To be an expert requires the work of a lifetime, nor can any one even then lay claim to the knowledge that will cover the whole field.

It was Sir Joshua Reynolds, I believe, who once said that the man who was able to pass judgment on a great work of art at first sight was a shallow charlatan. What, then, must be said of the man who in all-embracing confidence lays claim to expertship in every school and is ready to deliver a written opinion (on receipt of a fee) on any picture submitted to him?

Yet there are dozens of striplings, fresh from Julian's or the Beaux-Arts who, after a few years of copying in the Louvre, will tell you that they know all about the Old Masters. And even hide-bound old painters, reminiscent of their early student days, will claim to be the arbiters of a painting's authenticity, and with airy persiflage and reckless and ignorant remarks they will hold forth and display their innocuous imbecility. The paucity of their reasons when asked for analysis is usually commensurate with their pretensions.

A man with a fund of information that has cost him the labor of many years' careful observation is very conservative in his expertship.

An expert on any one painter should know that painter in all his manners, from his start to his finish, his different periods and styles and experiments. Then he can branch out and take other painters of the same school, or principal men of different schools. But a lifetime would be too short to acquire the knowledge to expertise, say: a Brouwer, a Nattier and a Luino.

It is easy, even for the layman, to understand modern painters. Even the Barbizon men of comparative recent art history may be readily recognized, for their theories and practices of glazings and under glazings and direct painting, their individual color, drawing, and brush handling are so well known that many can differentiate between the real and the bogus.

The science of expertising the older masters is, however, more difficult and only of recent origin. Morelli, the great Italian expert, may be considered the chief promoter of the new objective school of expertism. He pointed out the need of allowing the painting to speak for itself and the absolute folly of giving too much importance to pedigree or "provenance," so called; the greater value of following forms and certain mannerisms and characteristics in drawing. He went through the principal museums and restored many pictures to their proper places, notably in Hampton Court. The "Reading Magdalene" in Dresden he gave to a later artist and not